



Episode 96 - How to Manage Multiple Interests Successfully with Joel Bouchard

Else Kramer (00:00:00) - Yeah. All right. False brained humans, I am so happy to introduce to you Joe Bouchard. Welcome to the show.

Joel Burchard (00:00:11) - All right. Thanks for having me on. I'm looking forward to it. We've already had some pretty good discussions thus far, so I'm really excited.

Else Kramer (00:00:16) - Yeah, it's been super fun to get to meet you beforehand. And one of the things I always love to start with is asking, what is your biggest frustration?

Joel Burchard (00:00:28) - Yeah. You know, I think that my biggest frustration is just as a human being inconsistent. Right. I think, you know, I think that when you are somebody who is interested in a lot of things and striving to get better in a lot of ways, one thing I always tell my wife after I do an interview like this is that I hate listening back to it, because sometimes it feels like it's not the real me, right? Because I think about all the things that I talk about, and then I think about all the ways that I fail or I violate that in my day to day life.

Joel Burchard (00:01:05) - And that's I think that that's a real concern. But I think that being aware of it is, is enough to sort of invalidate it in some ways. You know, it's not like our lives are 30 minute TV episodes where you cut out all the junk and you just put in the stuff that is exciting or relevant or heroic. You know, life is 24 hours a day, and we all make mistakes every day, all the time.

Else Kramer (00:01:29) - And we step in poop and we wait at bus stops and.

Joel Burchard (00:01:32) - Yeah, exactly.

Else Kramer (00:01:33) - Yeah, all the things.

Joel Burchard (00:01:36) - My biggest frustration is being human.

Else Kramer (00:01:39) - I love that you're saying this. And actually, one of the exercises I often have my clients do is to draw a stick figure and then to, like, write all the perfectionist fantasies they have about themselves, right. The way they think they should be on that. Like what is A4 or A3 like, oh, you know, perfect meat is always on time is like especially ADHD people super organized, always does their workout right, reads all the books, all the things, and then once they're done, I ask them to like, okay, so look at this picture.

Else Kramer (00:02:10) - Right? Would you even want to know this person? Right. Yeah.

Joel Burchard (00:02:17) - Yeah. And there's there's flaws and downsides to to being that other way. You know, I think that I tend towards being over regimented sometimes. So um, you know, with, with my workouts. Right. I work out every single day and all of a sudden I realize, oh, man, you know, my joints are kind of hurting and I feel sort of worn out. I'll just kind of work through it. Right. And then you do that for weeks or months on an end, and then all of a sudden you end up getting to the point where it's like, oh, I can't even do it anymore. And it's like, well, what's wrong with me? You know? And then you take a week off and you feel great again. You go recovery.

Else Kramer (00:02:50) - Time. I mean, come on.

Joel Burchard (00:02:51) - Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly. And I mean, I think that applies to all aspects of life.

Joel Burchard (00:02:55) - You know, you need you need to have some sort of moderation and moderation and regimentation aren't necessarily the same thing.

Else Kramer (00:03:02) - Oh, 100%. Think that's actually my last teacher in school, you say? I think it was new names, right? Nothing in excess. Which was such great advice. Right? Just don't overdo it. What is with your brain or your body? Just don't get too obsessed. And I also remember when I was, like, still fanatically doing aikido and I'd go to dojo like six days a week because they weren't open seven days a week. Otherwise I would have probably gone and was devastated. Think I was going to go away on vacation or something, and I was so worried, like I'm not going to be training for two weeks. And I was like, super stressed out about it. I got back, my form was so much better.

Joel Burchard (00:03:42) - Yeah, yeah. And I've I've talked about this on other episodes with music. People ask me, yeah, when you go to write an album, you know, you've done six albums and seven EPs and dozens of singles.

Joel Burchard (00:03:56) - You know, when how do you approach music where you don't run out of ideas, right. And I'm not a great musician. I'm not a good musician. But, um, I think what helps me stay creative, using the limited tools and skill sets I have as a musician to create something new each time is is somewhat creating some of that space. You know, I think that there's the, the, the saying practice makes perfect, right? And I think there's some ways in which that's correct. Right. Practice can make you technically perfect, but I think practice also has the potential to put you in a rut and start to create these automatic. Yeah, these automatic responses in certain musical situations where you go, okay, well I can fall back on this because I know it. And that's where some of that stagnation comes in. So when I go to write an album, the first thing that I do is I stop listening to all music a month beforehand, I just, I don't listen.

Joel Burchard (00:04:52) - I'll start listening to podcast and audiobooks and other things. And what I find is that about a week into that process, all of a sudden musical ideas start popping into my head, things that I never would have thought of before. Sometimes whole songs fully formed that I've never heard right, and then going into the studio and putting them down is an entirely different process, because you might hear it in your head, and then when you start recording it, it becomes something different. But yes, I think that separating yourself from from the listening to music, and when I get to that point to even the practicing, just cutting off music altogether suddenly allows those kind of parts of your brain that you know, normally are working while you're doing these things to kind of relax and start communicating to other parts and creates something that is more new and genuine, I think. Yeah.

Else Kramer (00:05:48) - Totally. And I just want to reemphasize something that you said there, which I think is also really important for people to realize is that and remember when I was teaching photography, this and art, this was such an important thing.

Else Kramer (00:06:00) - People would want to not start right until they got everything sorted out. And I'd always have to like, remind them, listen, even if you have a plan, once you start creating and for use, like when you go into a studio, everything changes, right? You might have a song in your head is the same with an art project. With creating art, you have some idea of what what you're going to create. Once you start creating, it's a whole different story, right? Which is both frustrating and beautiful, I think. So it's very important to remember that first of all, you have to get started. And second, that once you get started, she changes. Doesn't mean something's going wrong.

Joel Burchard (00:06:37) - Yeah. And that's where you get into the woods where there's no rules anymore because everybody has a different process. You need to get to that point to create something worthwhile. But once you get to that point, everybody's different. You know, some people say, you know what? I just get completely creative.

Joel Burchard (00:06:53) - And then later on I edit out and then maybe they'll do that cycle several times. Um, for me, I'm a very fast working person. So when I go to write an album, usually I write the music while I'm recording in the studio. Um, and I don't go back and change anything. So it's about a week long. Long process. Usually in seven days I'll write and record and mix and master ten songs and distribute them insane.

Else Kramer (00:07:23) - Oh my God. Wow.

Joel Burchard (00:07:24) - Yeah, yeah. So very fast. And for me, part of that process is determining in the moment write what is worthwhile and what isn't. I've noticed that if I just put the creative stuff down when I go to edit it later, I don't do a good job editing after the fact, but I know that I can trust my intuition in the moment to make the right decision. And I know that's not the way it is for a lot of people.

Else Kramer (00:07:50) - How do you think you build that trust?

Joel Burchard (00:07:53) - Um, well, I think like with a lot of creative stuff, it's creating a lot of crap first.

Joel Burchard (00:07:58) - Yeah. So, you know, the first few years that I was doing things, um, and, you know, it's it what's hard again, frustrating part of being a person, right, is looking at that after the fact and then trying to pick out. Trying to find something good in it. All right, well, what was something that I did do right here, you know, and then trying to separate it from the stuff that you did bad. And that's an ongoing process, right? Still, when I release music to this day, I listen to it when I'm all said and done and I cringe, right? I go, oh, you know, like, what if people think that this sucks or it's embarrassing or whatever, but each time I go, you know what? This is? The way that I think of it is this is a snapshot of my life, right? This is a genuine, honest snapshot of where I was as a person. And I have that record and there's something honest about it.

Joel Burchard (00:08:49) - Years later, that stuff that you cringed at and you thought was sort of terrible and stuff, you listen to it years later and maybe it's not good, but it creates it gives you a feeling that connects you to your former self in a way that nothing else really can. Um, so when you recognize that value, it kind of frees you up to to give you some clarity and vision of what you want to keep going forward and what you want to get rid of. Yeah.

Else Kramer (00:09:15) - And also the fact that you're creating rather than waiting for perfection. Right. Because I think if you sort of arrive at something, you're like, this is it, you might as well die, to be honest. Yeah. There's nothing left to discover or improve.

Joel Burchard (00:09:31) - I think that's the hardest part. Talking to a lot of musician friends that I have, that's the biggest struggle musicians have, right, is they want to create something perfect. So I know people that have gone into the studio and, you know, they they've written songs and

then they've rewritten them and rewritten them, rewritten them, and they'll rerecord parts, you know, and I'll listen to it.

Joel Burchard (00:09:53) - And I've had people come into my studio, you know, that I'll do recordings for and they'll do a take and I'll go, that was good. No, something's not quite right. And they'll do it again and again. I'll listen to him do 50 identical takes. Right. Oh my God. Before they go. Oh well, you know, maybe maybe we should just stop, you know. And that's, that's the main downfall of a lot of musicians is getting to that point where you go, they just can't get past that block of. Whatever you record is going to be done by a person, right? Yes. And that's the and that's the biggest problem with a lot of modern music, is that a lot of the life gets sucked out of it due to timing, quantization or pitch, you know, corrections, those sorts of things. You have this plastic block of music versus something that's kind of real or genuine. But this is why.

Else Kramer (00:10:39) - Live is so fun, right? Because it's never perfect, but there's so much energy and it is just a it's so good.

Else Kramer (00:10:46) - But okay, tell us a bit more because we go straight in. Right. Like because the listeners may be wondering, okay, this dude is a musician, right? Because make them kind of reconstruct your personality. Give us a bit more. Let's start with the music. How does how did that get started in your life?

Joel Burchard (00:11:00) - Yeah. So music again, it's kind of an odd story. When I was a kid, I didn't really listen to any music or care for any of it. It wasn't until I was about 13 or so that I started listening to some classical music. Then when I was 14, three of my friends said, hey, let's start a band. And none of us played any instruments. So that's a very 13 year old boy thing to do. And so we just point to each other, go, okay, you're going to play drums, you're going to play bass, you'll play guitar, you'll play keyboard. So I got guitar. So I borrowed my brother's guitar and just kind of taught myself how to play it.

Joel Burchard (00:11:39) - And we played for a few years, and we were just starting to get to the point where we were playing out places and making some money, and we were talking about making some, you know, recordings and things. And then my bass player moved out of state to go to college, and my drummer got married at a very young age, and the band broke up. And so I'm, I'm 19 years old and I go, man, I'm just starting to to get into music, right? You know, I didn't listen to any when I was younger and I didn't play anything. And now all of a sudden it's here and I have this passion for it. So at 19 years old, I went and I spent my, my life savings at that point on music stuff. I bought a drum set and a bass guitar and a keyboard and a recording interface, and I bought all the stuff to build a studio computer, and I didn't know how to do any of it. Right. I just bought the stuff and I figured out how to build a computer, and I figured out how to set it all up.

Joel Burchard (00:12:38) - And it was it was hours of frustration. You know, I'm not saying this as a badge of honor. If anything, it's it's one of those frustrating things. Right? If I had had a

mentor at that point, yeah, I could have a lot of time. Yeah, my development would have gone ten times faster than it did. But but I struggled through it. And that's pretty much that's pretty much the story is, you know, I just taught myself how to play the instruments. And I've been making music ever since.

Else Kramer (00:13:04) - And how do you combine that with all the other stuff you do?

Joel Burchard (00:13:08) - Yeah. So, you know, I, I alluded to a few minutes ago being regimented. Right. And I think that that kind of concept has, you know, it's sort of a neutral word. But I think in, in terms of being a creative or a diverse person, it has a pejorative. Um. Bend to it and don't think that that's true, right? It has a.

Else Kramer (00:13:35) - Pejorative color kind of. Right.

Joel Burchard (00:13:37) - Yeah. I think that, you know, a lot of, a lot of creative people want to say, okay, well, I just want to be free and do what I want to do when I want to do it.

Else Kramer (00:13:45) - Exactly. And listen, I was actually working towards the next card, which is freedom, but yes. Thank you. Nice.

Joel Burchard (00:13:51) - Okay. All right. All right. Great on schedule. So yeah, I think that this idea of, of freedom is a bit illusory because I think that and again, this is probably heavily dependent on your personality type. You know, if you're the kind of person who is. Pretty self-discipline, then maybe you can sort of say, okay, well, I feel like doing this and then do it. Um, but I consider myself to be pretty self disciplined, and I know that I wouldn't do that right if I if I create a block of time where there's nothing scheduled. I tend to not do anything.

Joel Burchard (00:14:25) - So, um, I think that there's things that in your life that you can sort of. Take the thought out of in order to speed up your decision making and sort of, you know, take some stuff out. So I got three colors of t shirts, right. And I've got, I wear the same pairs of jeans, you know, so I don't have to think about what I'm going to wear. Right. Yeah, I, I eat the same thing every day, which a lot of people think that for.

Else Kramer (00:14:52) - Me, breakfast. Same breakfast every morning. Right. Like it saves me so much energy.

Joel Burchard (00:14:58) - Right, right. And it helps with me because I can't smell. So I don't taste very well. And so it's not a big deal to me. I just eat a bunch of healthy food and yeah, it's it works out, you know, same I've got to work out schedule. You know, that I kind of vary to keep things going but same time each day and then you know I.

Joel Burchard (00:15:19) - I devote myself to the different hobbies that I have in different ways. There's some that I give a little bit of time to each day, and then there's some that I don't really

engage with for long periods of time. But then when I'm working on them, I spend all of my free time working on.

Else Kramer (00:15:37) - Them, kind of obsessively almost, or.

Joel Burchard (00:15:40) - Yeah, yeah, I think the different and you know, music is one of those. Right. Um, so like I said, you know, practice is great from a technical aspect. And, you know, I, I do try to take maybe five minutes each day to run through some chords and run through some scales. But really with music, there might be a 6 or 8 month stretch where I don't do any more than that. But then when I do sit down, you know, it's several hours a day. Sometimes I'm, you know, taking, you know, time off from work to only do that for that stretch of time and that level of immersion really provides some benefits over writing.

Joel Burchard (00:16:21) - Right? I just finished writing my first novel, and that's something you can sort of chip away at, right? I can do a little bit each day and I can get there eventually with an album. I think that just because of the the type of creative person I am in that context, I need to get it all out at once. It needs to be a cohesive thing altogether.

Else Kramer (00:16:39) - Yeah, but I totally get that. And I think for me, it's like I love to design challenges, which are so good, but the whole design, it couldn't like design a challenge now and then run it like in three months, right? It has to be like this sort of contained effort. And I'm obsessed with everything that's going on at the time and constantly tweaking and making it even better. And then it's gone, basically.

Joel Burchard (00:17:00) - Yeah, yeah. And that's another part of of freedom that's a little bit difficult. We were just talking about the other day on my podcast, and I can't remember who it was, if it was David Chalmers or Daniel Dennett, but one of them was talking about how if you sit down at a keyboard and somebody says you can play any melody you want, it's very hard to come up with something.

Else Kramer (00:17:20) - Yes, it's a blank canvas, right?

Joel Burchard (00:17:22) - But if somebody provides you a melody and says, create something new out of that, you have a lot easier time. And so I think that that's another part of the the structure that sort of helps is when you go to engage in creative pursuits, it helps to start out with some limitations, which kind of seems counterintuitive. But like with my most recent album, um, there was I sort of built the whole album around two concepts. One was. I realized the music I was listening to, I said, you know what? I really am enjoying a lot of short songs. Songs that are under three minutes long. I said, I'm going to try to write an album where the majority of the songs are under three minutes long, and I didn't stifle my creativity over it, like there was a couple songs that were over three minutes, and I didn't let that ruin my day, right? Sure, they needed to be over that that time period, but for the most part, I think the album's ten songs and it's 27 minutes long.

Joel Burchard (00:18:20) - So for the most part, I did it. And the other part was bass tones. You know, in a lot of modern music, the bass is really only there to provide low end content, but you don't hear any distinct bass notes happening. Yeah. And so I had been listening to, you know, some Bootsy Collins basslines and some, some of these different bass lines where they're just really complex and cool. And they had this, this sort of counter movement to the other melodies and stuff really weird effects on them and things. And I thought, I want to, I want to write an album that has some of those. And so with those, you know, just two limitations, right? I was able to build an album that has a concept to it, you know, something that seems cohesive and seems put together well. So I think that, you know, there's something to that. When you go into a creative thing, you know, it's harder to start with a blank canvas than to start with just 1 or 2 sort of guiding principles to keep you going in a direction that you want to go in that moment 100%.

Else Kramer (00:19:25) - And I think the same goes as we said for life, right? Like I have the same stuff with clothes, always wear black tights, right? Like every single day. It's very simple. No brainer. The more rules you have, the less headspace you free up for stuff that really matters to you. And of course, you don't want to turn your life into this totally predictable, you know, nightmare. Of course, I think people sort of, when they hear me say stuff like, I eat the same breakfast every day. They're like, your life's going to be so boring. I'm like, you have no idea how crazy that shit my life is, which is why I need to eat the same breakfast every day. Right? So there we go. So freedom can show up in so many different ways. And also which which I love about you. The freedom to do so many different things. Which is also why I want to have you on the podcast, because I think so many listeners think, oh my God, if I don't stick to one thing, I'm flaky, right? I can't have too many interests or I can have the interest, but I can't pursue them at the level I want to because I'll never be taken seriously, etcetera, etcetera.

Else Kramer (00:20:29) - So can you speak to that a little bit? How's that working out for you?

Joel Burchard (00:20:33) - Yeah, I think that, you know, tying in with what we've said so far, I think that like the very first thing, the frustration. Right? Yeah. Life isn't life isn't 30 minute TV episodes. Right. You have 24 hours in a day. And so, you know, I mean, I sleep 8.5 hours a day, like I sleep a lot. And, you know, I work a full time job, but I find time to do a lot of these other things because of the structure. Right? The schedule, you know, the regimentation. You know, I think what it comes down to is you have to find the things that are important. Right? I think for, for me, non-negotiables. Yeah. And so for me, something like eating right is not important. And it might be because I don't taste very well, very well. But to me it's the sort of thing where it's like, listen, I just want to get this over with and get on to stuff that I want to do.

Joel Burchard (00:21:29) - For some people, that's a very important part of their life. You know, the and if you look at it, the, the preparation and, you know, the research and the the experience of eating and, and the clean up and all of that stuff can take. Yeah, it can take a huge amount of your life as opposed to just, you know, throwing a couple raw vegetables in your mouth and then moving on to the next thing you're doing. Right. And so for me, it's, you know, it's prioritization and it's, it's that's very important to create a healthy life. Right? I like I said, I'm married, I have a

very active social life, but at the same time. My wife and my friends and my family. They know what kind of person I am. And they, you know, we have clear expectations. Set of okay, well, between these hours and these hours, you're not going to be able to get a hold of me because I'm working on schoolwork, you know? Hey, guess what? You know, two weeks from now, I have time in to start creating an album.

Joel Burchard (00:22:27) - So you're not going to see me like, that's just the way it's going to be, right? And so.

Else Kramer (00:22:32) - Yeah, it's also about boundaries.

Joel Burchard (00:22:34) - Yes. Yeah.

Else Kramer (00:22:35) - Managing expectations.

Joel Burchard (00:22:37) - Right. Yep. Yeah. And so I think that that's that pretty much sums it up is, you know, prioritization on your part, communication with the people in your, in your life. And then just knowing what is healthy for your, your individual context. And you don't always get it right. Right. That's why I'm taking time off from working out, you know, because sometimes you hurt yourself overextending. But listen.

Else Kramer (00:23:01) - This is but this is basically the art of living, accepting that you don't always get it right and that if you're lucky, you get to try again. Yeah. Yeah, right. Seriously. So let's talk about something else that is sort of major component of your life, which is another reason. Of course I want to chat with you, which is philosophy. How did that start? What got you started on philosophy?

Joel Burchard (00:23:27) - Um, I think philosophy is something that everybody is interested in and they don't know it.

Joel Burchard (00:23:33) - Um, you know, because growing up in it's it's not like they teach philosophy or logic or anything in schools anymore, you know, so there's very little exposure to it that a lot of they do, by the.

Else Kramer (00:23:47) - Way, in Holland. But they have only recently started doing it.

Joel Burchard (00:23:51) - Yeah. Yeah. No it's great. And it should be, it should be taught everywhere. I know in America doesn't happen. So a lot of people can go all the way into to college, right. Thinking that philosophy is just a bunch of guys with big beards and dusty books, you know, complaining about stuff.

Else Kramer (00:24:08) - But it can be.

Joel Burchard (00:24:11) - Yeah. Oh, yeah, definitely can be. Definitely can. All right. So, um, my podcast is Philosophy Podcast, and I do it with who? My resident expert, who was my philosophy professor in college. So I went into college not knowing much about it. And then I took a couple philosophy classes with him, and I was just hooked from that point.

Joel Burchard (00:24:33) - But what?

Else Kramer (00:24:34) - Why? What got you hooked?

Joel Burchard (00:24:37) - Um, you know, I think that it had a lot to do with his teaching method. And, you know, in, in a large part. But I also took English classes with him and, um, you know, although I have a, a respect for, for literature.

Else Kramer (00:24:54) - You did just write a novel.

Joel Burchard (00:24:56) - Yeah. Yeah. It didn't it doesn't quite hook you in the same way. And I think that's because of the. It's what is in philosophy that everybody likes but doesn't know it. And what that is, is, is that it applies to anything at the most foundational, basic levels. So it doesn't matter what it is. And we demonstrate this a lot by doing different types of shows. You know, we have shows that are about sort of prototypical philosophical topics like time or God or those sorts of things. But we've also done philosophy episodes on things like Disney princesses or, you know, entertainment franchise reboots, that sort of thing.

Joel Burchard (00:25:40) - And what you'll what you're surprised about is when you're doing research for these shows and you're thinking, oh, man, how do you talk about this stuff on a deep level? And then an hour in you go, oh, this was this was a lot more. There's a lot more to this than I ever thought there would be. And life is like that in every aspect, right. That's why to me, you know, just being alive is so exciting, right, is because you can look at anything. And if you try to look at it at the smallest level, or if you try to zoom out enough, it all becomes this mysterious, ethereal thing that you can't put your finger on. And that's what philosophy is, is trying to figure out those things at their beginning or at their end or at their essence. Right. And that's the way that we approach the show is taking usually just one word or two words and saying, you know, what is the formative historical thought on this? And then what is the essence of it? What is it actually? And then asking questions about what are the implications of that for humanity, right.

Else Kramer (00:26:42) - For mankind. Right.

Joel Burchard (00:26:43) - And womankind and everybody, everybody has everybody has opinions on this sort of thing. And not they're not all as well thought out or rationed as, as everybody else's. But everybody has thoughts and opinions on them. And that's why philosophy is appealing to to everybody. I think they just don't. They're just not aware of it and realize it.

Else Kramer (00:27:04) - Right. The reason I studied philosophy is I was just in this constant state of awe with the world I still am. I always like, I don't need to say drugs. Thanks very much. Right? Like I'm just like, you just give me a flower and I'll just be like, what? How even or light or time mean. Go on people, that's my drugs. But just this awe and this curiosity. Like, how in the world does this exist, right? How does it work? What is it really like? So many questions. And then playing with that. But also but I think that's important to emphasize. I think something that people, first of all, people misunderstand two things that I'm going to take this opportunity to get that out of the way.

Else Kramer (00:27:48) - People confuse philosophy and psychology. I don't know why that is, but I'll say to someone like, oh, I studied philosophy and they'll say, yeah, yeah, it's so interesting, right? How the human mind works and you know that people get depressed. I'll be like, no, no, no psychology, philosophy. So I don't know where this confusion starts. But people, it's a different thing.

Joel Burchard (00:28:09) - Yeah. Yeah. No. And what going back to what you were saying, I've got right here for like, think \$30. My nephew's birthday's coming up. He's turning nine. And so my mom was complaining about, you know. Oh, he's he always wants to be on on the iPad, you know, playing games on, you know, looking at screens and stuff. So I bought him this little handheld microscope and they had a deal where, yeah, you could get a, you could get a two pack for, for a discount. So I got him one. And I've just been running around with the thing, looking at your own, looking at bugs, looking at flowers and stuff.

Joel Burchard (00:28:45) - And I mean, check out rust.

Else Kramer (00:28:47) - Seriously?

Joel Burchard (00:28:48) - Yeah, yeah. And like you were saying, you don't need to take drugs, right? Me, my wife and I were having a campfire the other day, and I looked up at the night sky and I go, isn't it wild that there's no ceiling up there? And she goes, are you high? Yeah.

Else Kramer (00:29:02) - Yes, I am right now.

Joel Burchard (00:29:04) - Right now the air is the ceiling. That's the only thing separating us from forever. Right? And you go, wow, how does that work? You know, you you can know the scientific details of it and just viscerally, it still is something that creates a sublime experience. And I think that having that sort of curiosity about things is really what what keeps you alive.

Else Kramer (00:29:27) - 100%, 100% and curious. And that keeps life so exciting, right? Always and never boring. And I think many of those questions are never going to be answered. And that is fine too, right? Yeah.

Else Kramer (00:29:40) - So which brings me to my next card, which is play. Like how do you incorporate play in your regimented.

Joel Burchard (00:29:49) - Um, all the, all the time. All the time. Tell me more. It's funny because you mentioned psychology. Psychology is what I'm getting a PhD in. So I've got. You know, some insight into the human brain and how it works and, and those sorts of things. And play is vitally important to having in intelligence. And what they find is that lots of times people's humor correlates with their intelligence. So that's something to keep in mind if you come across somebody who's very funny but doesn't necessarily tick all the boxes in terms of formal education, they're probably still a very intelligent person. Um, and, you know, that could go the other way around, too. You might find somebody with a lot of credentials. Um, but, you know, some of the failure of the educational system is that we allow people to pay for pieces of paper that allow them access to jobs versus actually creating intelligent people, but 100%.

Joel Burchard (00:30:52) - Um, yeah. As far as.

Else Kramer (00:30:54) - I'm curious about this. And since I have now someone who's doing a PhD in psychology, I want to ask, does it have something to do with inflexibility like mental inflexibility, or is it something else? Do you think like a like no sense of humor correlation with being? Yeah, I think.

Joel Burchard (00:31:10) - You know, I think that it is. I think it is something that it happens when you. You end up in this space where you're getting fully encompassed by something, right? And I think that that's where a lot of people get with the PhD is because of the conditions they have to take them under, right? Lots of people, you know, you're spending vast amounts of money on it. And so you have to, you know, do a teaching job and you have to live on campus and you have to do these things. And so your whole life kind of becomes this one thing that you're working at for years and you're under high amounts of pressure.

Joel Burchard (00:31:48) - Um, and I'm fortunate enough that that's not the way I have to do it. You know, I was in the the army, and so they they pay for my school. And I said, well, if you're going to pay for it, I'm going to keep going. Right. So I'm able to go and not it's not costing me a lot of money and I'm going part time. I just take one class at a time, you know, so I'm able to keep a healthy balance with other aspects of my life and things. But I can see that being sort of the driving factor in causing this sort of inflexible or almost robotic in some cases with people who who attain these highest, you know, terminal degrees and things is I think it just becomes this encompassing thing until it is your life. In some ways, it's not part of it. It kind of is your life which.

Else Kramer (00:32:37) - Takes us back to play. Right. And all the play has been kind of deleted. And I think many people who start doing PhD end up hating it sadly and hating themselves and hating their subject.

Else Kramer (00:32:50) - Not all of them, but think because it is so all encompassing and also there's so much pressure, it kind of completely kills it, and it kills all the joy and the playfulness

and the light touch that you also need, even when you're studying something at such a deep level.

Joel Burchard (00:33:05) - Yeah. And that's I think, the pressure is it. Right. Because, you know, I'm the kind of person who I'm always researching stuff. Right? So, you know, I'm reading books and research articles for fun. And so it has happened to me before where, you know, during an actual course, I'll be reading books or research articles and I'll find myself, um, you know, feeling this amount of pressure and then suddenly realizing that I'm not really understanding what I'm reading and, you know, trying to go back and forth, and I just have to stop and take a breath and go listen, like you're not spending, you know, you're not putting yourself into huge amounts of debt. Um, you know, you're just doing this for fun, essentially.

Joel Burchard (00:33:47) - So let it be fun. You know, stop worrying about, you know, the stuff that you're reading is really, really cool. So pay attention to what you're reading and stop thinking about your what grade you're going to get on the next assignment or whatever. Yeah. And and that's a whole different thing. Right? I've, I've had a 4.0 my whole college career. So now there's like this pressure that only I'm putting on myself to, to keep that going. Right.

Else Kramer (00:34:12) - Nobody else. Okay. So you have to translate that for us Europeans. What does that mean?

Joel Burchard (00:34:16) - 4.0 so that's straight A's I've never got anything that isn't innate. Yeah. So um, so now if I'm getting towards the end of a course and, you know, I'm on the, the edge of it, right? I start to think, oh man, am I, am I going to get it? And you have to talk yourself off that ledge because you go, well, the grade isn't what's important.

Joel Burchard (00:34:38) - That's not what's important. What's important is learning the content. But as far as that.

Else Kramer (00:34:42) - Kills all creativity and play, right? Once you put that that much pressure on yourself, even if you are paying a lot of money for your education, I think you have to try even harder to be able to step back and see it in a playful manner, rather than have this kind of original, clenching sort of horrible experience.

Joel Burchard (00:35:01) - Yeah, yeah. And I think that, you know, play as far as play goes in everyday life, it doesn't have to be a separate activity from what you're doing all the time. Like my, my wife will get mad at me because lots of times we'll be having a discussion and I'll just sort of launch into this story, start telling her a story, and sometimes she she can't tell when I'm telling her a story and when I'm telling her the truth. Right. She'll the best example I could think of is beef Wellington. Right? She has said, hey, what's beef Wellington? And I said, well, you know, in the 1800s, the Duke of Wellington mounted an expedition to the Antarctic and he ran out of supplies.

Joel Burchard (00:35:43) - And so, um, the only things that he had left were some beef and, you know, some flour and some cornmeal, and he sort of mixed it together and made this dish and, you know, he saved the lives of the explorers, and everybody thought it was delicious. And he went back to England and it became a hit. And she goes, wow, that's an incredible story. I'm going to tell everybody that. I go, don't tell everybody that. I just made it up. And so this idea of play, right, you can do it, you know, in narrative form. And I think that free association and kind of. On the spot. Trying to create stories and be creative is a big part of it, and another big part of it is opening your eyes to the things around you, like we were talking about earlier, right? If you see a flower, don't just see a flower. See what a flower is, right? If you look up and you see the sky.

Joel Burchard (00:36:37) - You know you're not looking at. Don't look at the clouds. Don't look at the stars. Look at what they are. You know, and that's sort of a something that language has a hard time capturing, capturing 100%. But you're looking beyond just the shape or just the pattern you're looking at what is that thing? And any time you start asking yourself, what is that? It'll take you some wild places.

Else Kramer (00:37:01) - And also, what is that thing? What is it in relation to me and what the hell is happening here? Yeah, yeah. Basic questions. And that also reminds me of the total perspective vortex in *The Hacker's Guide to the Galaxy*. For people who haven't read it, this is kind of a torture instrument. Um, that when you go in, you see yourself in perspective to the entire universe, and that kind of kills people like they scream and it's horrible. And then this guy with this massive ego goes in and he he goes in and he goes, yeah, that was fun.

Else Kramer (00:37:33) - But the total I think that is also the thing that maybe people are kind of scared, like if I realize. What my significance is, in a way, right to the rest of the universe. And I misconstrue the meaning of that. That could make me very depressed. And I think that's also what happens in my experience. It happened to me in a lot of my fellow students, like first year philosophy students, second semester depression sets in. Like what? What? What is the meaning of it all? Is there even any meaning? What's the point? Right? And I think that is where it would have been useful when I was studying. Of course, that was the 90s. I hope it's very different now. We could have done with some more practical philosophy, right? And like, how can philosophy actually help you appreciate life and sort of, again, being that side of all and delight rather than sort of going into that, oh, what's the point? And we're all like specks of dust or, you know, grains of sand and.

Else Kramer (00:38:37) - Yeah.

Joel Burchard (00:38:37) - And it's interesting. Right? Because, um, there's nothing false about that statement. Right? I think that, you know, people give me a hard time sometimes because I don't have any kids. I think, well, well, well, don't you want kids? You know what? And what isn't that okay?

Else Kramer (00:38:54) - I just have to pause you on that, because I've just been reading an patchett's book of essays on this, and apparently she gets pestered with the same question all the time. People, can you please stop asking other people about why they are not having kids, why they are having kids when they're having the next one, or whether they should be having excellence. Just bloody rude. Do not do it. Okay.

Joel Burchard (00:39:17) - Like, yeah, it is rude. And you know, it's kind of mean and I've, I took a path early that I don't take any more because people, you know, you're not out to wreck people's psyches even though they might be out to wreck yours by asking you those questions.

Joel Burchard (00:39:31) - But, you know, the approach that I took for a little bit was, why aren't you having kids? Like, what's what's even the point? I say, well, what's the point of anything, right? Like, you're going to die, your kids are going to die someday. The whole human species is going to die.

Else Kramer (00:39:44) - The sun is going to blow. I mean, seriously.

Joel Burchard (00:39:47) - All life in the universe is going to die. It'll become just this diffuse puddle of energy, like, so what is the point of anything? Right? And I think that again, some people hear that, and I think that the instant reaction is to have this sort of existential crisis and to think, well, what is the point? Right?

Else Kramer (00:40:06) - Why even get up in the morning?

Joel Burchard (00:40:08) - Yeah, yeah. And I've, I've been at that point. Right. I've, I've felt that kind of depression before but. Nowadays, I think. What? What helps me is I. I embrace the mystery of it a little bit.

Joel Burchard (00:40:23) - And there's some psychology to this. Things that you. Things that inspire or sublime or terror. Anything that inspires those big ethereal emotions, um, constant contact with it will tend to, to bring them into perspective a little bit better. And so.

Else Kramer (00:40:43) - So dancing with it rather. Yeah. Yeah.

Joel Burchard (00:40:45) - Exactly. So, um, you know, the more that you start to think about these sorts of things and meaning is the tough one, right? In floss, everything is the tough one. Philosophy. But meaning is especially difficult. Um, I think that meaning if you were looking at it at a global level. Yeah, there's no, you know, you outside of having a religious frame of reference, it's hard to come up with what a meaning for anything is.

Else Kramer (00:41:11) - So how do you come up with meaning personally?

Joel Burchard (00:41:16) - For me, meaning is more of a personal thing, right? I think that where people get hung up is on the. The reality of death, right? If you realize that you're going to die, then you go, well, what was the point? But really the.

Joel Burchard (00:41:36) - That's a sort of paradox that is wrong, right? Because in reality, if you were immortal and were to live forever, then you'd have to ask what the meaning is exactly. Because eventually you'd do everything. You'd see everything. Everything would be done, and everything would be boring, right? There would be nothing left to explore do.

Else Kramer (00:41:56) - And what you just said sort of, to me, sounds like, you know, it's no point going on holiday because I'll have to come back home. Yeah, exactly.

Joel Burchard (00:42:04) - Yeah, that's exactly it. Right? That's it in a nutshell. It's a very good analogy. So really it's our mortality, our limited ness that makes experience special and experiences is what it's about, right? We have the ability to to see flowers and stars and things that inanimate objects can't, things that dead people can't. Right. So that is special. And that's where the meaning is. And you know, this idea of death, people being terrified and, well, what'll happen after I die? Well, what happened before you were born, right? Nothing.

Else Kramer (00:42:40) - Are you terrified of that, too? Right?

Joel Burchard (00:42:43) - Yeah. You know, I think that. I don't know. I think that it's healthy. There's these emotions, right, that are very similar, but they're distinct. Right. And I think that terror. Right. Terrific and terrible. They're both from the same root word. Right.

Else Kramer (00:43:02) - Excitement and anxiety.

Joel Burchard (00:43:03) - Yeah. Yeah. And so I think that I think that it's good. And I think it's part of what makes us human is experiencing these things. Right. And so. I don't ever want to get so familiar with the vastness of space that I don't feel curiosity or or sublime. But I also don't want to let the infinite expanse of space terrify me or overwhelm me in some way. It's the same thing with death, right? I don't want to let death terrify me because it's an inevitability I will die. And so if I let it terrify me, then it's ruling my life in a negative way. But I do always want to be in awe of the mystery of death, right.

Joel Burchard (00:43:50) - Of that. And I think that if you're an Or or you're viewing it as this sublime thing, if you're adding a positive, curious bend to it, then it's something that can be healthy and beneficial. And looking at it and saying, how is it that life is so much weirder than anybody think anybody could have ever imagined, right? It seems like and, you know, science is a good pursuit of this, you know, cosmology. Every time we look out into space with a more powerful telescope, thinking that we're going to get answers to questions, we end up with even crazier questions, right? And so, you know, as far as death goes. To me, it's I. I find the meaning in life and what I'm doing right now because nothing else is guaranteed, you know? And so what is happening now has to be the most important thing as far as what happens afterwards. You

know, I don't I can't say. Right. And so I'm not I think that. In that respect, being an atheist might be the least appealing option because definitely, you know, because.

Else Kramer (00:45:02) - The least bang for your buck.

Joel Burchard (00:45:04) - Right, right. You know, you still are having a religious faith, but you're having a religious faith that there's nothing. Yeah.

Else Kramer (00:45:11) - They used to stand empty handed, basically.

Joel Burchard (00:45:14) - And yeah, that's a pretty it's a pretty arrogant position to take. You know, I think we're all necessarily agnostic, right? We all don't know what's out there. And some of us would like to hope that there is a god or gods, and some of us would like to hope that there's not. But none of us know. And the mystery is fascinating. Right?

Else Kramer (00:45:36) - And it's okay, I have to I have to pause you there because think it's something very important, sort of underneath this, which people don't realize and try to ignore it. Their own peril is the power of paradox.

Joel Burchard (00:45:49) - Hmm.

Else Kramer (00:45:49) - Yeah, right. So we can live and sort of live and be an atheist, but also embrace the mystery. Right. We can be in paradox. And the same with science.

Else Kramer (00:46:03) - We can believe that right now the model we have is the model to explain what's going on with the world. And we can accept that someday. You know, the the new Webb telescope or whatever's going to happen is going to bring us new data where we're going to have to let go of that model. And there's a new model.

Joel Burchard (00:46:21) - Yeah, absolutely. And I mean, that's that's the history of science is, you know, science is a process. It's not a statement of facts. As a matter of fact, there are no facts. And in science you don't prove anything. All you do is disprove theories that don't work. And so you can find support for theories. But if you ever hear somebody saying that they're proving something, it's they're they're probably not a source flag. Yeah. Yeah. As a matter of fact, we just did an episode on on my podcast a couple of weeks ago on Boltzmann Brains. I don't know if you heard of this, no topic, but it's essentially what they're talking about is, you know, even in science, when you have laws, right, you have the second law of thermodynamics, right? That energy in a closed system is likely to tend towards disorder.

Joel Burchard (00:47:10) - Entropy. Right.

Else Kramer (00:47:11) - Entropy. Right. Exactly. Like and we always joke like, well, ADHD people tend to joke like entropy. My room you know.

Joel Burchard (00:47:19) - Yeah, yeah.

Else Kramer (00:47:20) - Kind of proof.

Joel Burchard (00:47:21) - And so with with the second law of thermodynamics and the reality of entropy. Um, you know, it's funny because even with that, something that's called the law, the physicists have to go, well, actually, it's not so much a law as a probability. Right. And so once you start looking at quantum mechanics over an infinite span of time, um, quantum fluctuations can cause different particle arrangements to pop into existence. And sometimes you get very low entropy configurations. You know, it's the equivalent of just dumping out dice or coins, right? If you dump out a billion coins enough times, eventually they'll all land heads up. And that's a very low entropy state. But eventually, you know, one in every so often that will happen and you'll get a universe, right. Um, Boltzmann brains are kind of interesting because we don't have to go into it because that's not what the episode is about, but it's just an interesting topic.

Joel Burchard (00:48:23) - Boltzmann brains are essentially saying, well, if you're dumping out that that giant thing of pennies and they are, they're all landing heads up according to the, you know, parsimony and Occam's razor, you want the most simplistic explanation?

Else Kramer (00:48:41) - Well, just for people who don't know Ockham's razor, do not multiply entities beyond necessity.

Joel Burchard (00:48:46) - Yes. And so Boltzmann brain says, well, what is more likely that the whole universe would have sprung out of existence from a quantum fluctuation, or that a single human brain, with all of your thoughts and memories and experiences, would have popped into existence and imagined it. All right. And. So it's just a mind bending concept, right? It's this. And then. And that adds to meaning too, right? Well, what is how does it change the meaning of your life if you are this tiny speck in this huge universe, or if you are the entire universe, your brain that popped into existence with all of this is all there is. Right? You're right.

Joel Burchard (00:49:27) - Yeah. It doesn't. Right? It doesn't change your subjective experience at all. But I think that we like to conflate our subjective experience with objective reality, and that's just not the way it is.

Else Kramer (00:49:38) - Also because we like to use that to give meaning. Right?

Joel Burchard (00:49:42) - Yeah.

Else Kramer (00:49:43) - And just staying on the topic of paradox, I think too many people. And the problem with a lot of fast brained humans, hello, listeners, is that they feel they need to understand everything, right? Like and they feel very uncomfortable if they can't get all the ducks in a row. And the thing is, even with physics, all ducks are not in a row, right? So let's talk time. That is my next card. Mean. Yeah. Paradox time. Does it exist?

Joel Burchard (00:50:21) - Yeah. So there's a couple of ways to look at this. You know in physics is a bit torn on it. Um. You can have a black universe where time doesn't exist. The past, present, and future are all in one big jello mold, right? That is already there.

Joel Burchard (00:50:38) - You could have an expanding black universe, which is where the future doesn't yet exist, but the past and present always exist. So you have just this thing that's expanding, and what's behind is set in stone, and what's ahead of it isn't yet.

Else Kramer (00:50:57) - I think this is what most people how most people think about time.

Joel Burchard (00:51:01) - Probably. Yeah, yeah, you think of the past as being set in stone, but the future hasn't happened yet. Yeah. Um, but there's also the possibility in the black universe that the future has already happened and that everything is determined. And that creates this freewill conundrum where we go, well, no matter what I do next, it was already determined that that's what I was going to do, and that that bugs a lot of people as well. Yeah, but physics has and there's actually been experiments done. It's a very complex experiment, so I can't really explain it verbally. But you can find on YouTube videos, demonstrations of it being done, um, where if you look at particle duality.

Joel Burchard (00:51:43) - So if you have a double slit experiment is what they call it, you put two slits in a piece of paper, you shoot some photons or electrons at it. Um. What happens is they find out that, okay, well, if you shoot it through one, it looks like it's a particle. And then if you shoot it through two, it looks like it's a wave. And those two things are impossible. It has to be one or the other. Um, and then they started to get more sophisticated and they start observing it and they go, well, wait a minute. This thing. Looks like a wave all the way up until we observe it. Then it looks like a particle. Then they get more and more sophisticated. Long story short, in non-technical terms, but again, it's been done experimentally and you can watch the experiment being done on the internet. Um. With various detectors and things. What they find is that, okay, well, we can actually watch this stream of electrons go out as a wave.

Joel Burchard (00:52:44) - And then after we observe them, it turns into particles. But it doesn't just turn into particles when we observe it. When we observe it, its entire path backwards is particle.

Else Kramer (00:52:56) - History has just been changed.

Joel Burchard (00:52:58) - Yes. So the flow of time. Yes. We think of this. We think of the arrow of time, right? The time always goes from past to future. Well, on the very fine level. On the particle level, that's not true. Time appears to go both forwards and backwards. And there's no laws of physics that we've discovered yet that prevents time from going backwards and forwards. So a lot of we need.

Else Kramer (00:53:27) - A little pause here to let that sink in. People. If you need time, just press pause.

Joel Burchard (00:53:33) - Right.

Else Kramer (00:53:36) - So a lot of mind explodes a little bit.

Joel Burchard (00:53:37) - Yeah, yeah. So a lot of physicists have postulated that time is really just an intrinsic part of the human condition. We use time in order to interpret the world around us, but it's not real at all.

Joel Burchard (00:53:52) - It's a.

Else Kramer (00:53:53) - Sense making tool.

Joel Burchard (00:53:54) - Basically. Yes, yes.

Else Kramer (00:53:56) - We need to make sense of our experience. So we invent time, right?

Joel Burchard (00:54:00) - Which just seems totally bonkers, right? That we could have that kind of power. Yeah. Um, but, uh, that's and and this is where science meets philosophy, right? Philosophy has two. It bookends science. Right? The origins of science always start in philosophy. And the future of science always ends in philosophy. And that's why it's the coolest thing to me. But but consciousness is the same way. And they've done another very simple experiment that kind of demonstrates this. When people get upset about the other, the other one, the the block universe where the future's already set. Yeah, the free will. Well, like. Yeah, well, I have free will. I have conscious experience. You know, I consciously think about what I'm going to do and then I execute it. Well, they did this study. I think it was last year.

Joel Burchard (00:54:50) - It might have been the year before where they all they did is they just had a picture of a beehive, and they just tracked pupil movement as people looked over the picture and they'd ask him to look at different things and stuff. Afterwards. When they put the data together, what they found was that the rate at which the human eye was going over the picture was far too fast for the the brain systems involved to consciously process.

Else Kramer (00:55:23) - The visual input. Basically. Yes, yes. Yeah, yeah.

Joel Burchard (00:55:26) - But the the person was able to respond and take in and act as if they did know what they were seeing before they knew what they were seeing. Exactly. And so that's.

Else Kramer (00:55:37) - An image in our brain rather than seeing.

Joel Burchard (00:55:40) - And that's that's where the psychology part gets interesting for me. That's why I like doing that's why I'm getting my PhD in psychology. Um, versus philosophy is first off, um, psychology is a little bit more useful in the.

Else Kramer (00:55:56) - In the I have to challenge that. I would translate that as a little bit more practically like applicable.

Else Kramer (00:56:03) - Yeah. Yeah, yeah. If you allow that.

Joel Burchard (00:56:05) - But also it's kind of interesting, like when you were talking earlier about how people mix up philosophy and psychology. Well, in some regards, philosophy is kind of the output of human psychology, right? As far as we know, there's nobody else out there philosophizing. So philosophy is results part of our part of our psychology. Yeah. Um, so that's kind of an interesting feedback loop, right. Because psychology creates philosophy. But then philosophy sheds light on what creates our psychology and our life and everything else. So it's interesting. That's an interesting kind of paradox. But but yeah, I like that part of psychology looking at, you know, sensory, you know, the, the your sensory perceptions and then how they're cognitively integrated and what the output of that is. Right.

Else Kramer (00:56:56) - And it's insane. Right. Like as a coach I work with this very often. Like people think they know what they see. They think they can trust their memories, which is also fascinating, which we now know from neuroscience.

Else Kramer (00:57:06) - Like every time you retrieve a memory, you alter it. Right? So yeah, again, like there is so much crazy shit going on in your brain, you have no idea. And yet people still think, oh, I saw it. So like, I know it, it's actually happened. No, no, no, your brain is so clever and so beautiful and so smart. But that also means it actually creates visuals for you rather than taking what is out there. And we could do like an entire podcast, which we're not going to do right now, but maybe someday. On whether you can even see the world.

Joel Burchard (00:57:40) - Yeah, yeah.

Else Kramer (00:57:41) - No.

Joel Burchard (00:57:41) - And kind of like when I was talking about how I trick my wife by telling stories, right? Yeah. Well, your brain does that to yourself all the time. Your brain is telling you stories that are not true. Right. And one of my degrees is in criminal justice. And that was part of the subject that they did.

Joel Burchard (00:57:58) - There was, you know, how you can't trust eyewitness statements, right? You have to go on other evidence as well. Yeah. So um, but yeah, it's it's really interesting stuff. And that's part of and you can use things from your everyday life to inform your research and how you want to look at things. Right. And that's, that's another thing that I like with psychology is, um, you know, like my dad died a little while ago. And then for a long time, I was having dreams about him. Right. And you go, well, what's happening in the dreaming process? Right. And I designed I'm in the process of designing an experiment where you use transcranial magnetic stimulation under functional magnetic resonance imaging to

look at the medial prefrontal cortex and posterior cingulate cortex, which are parts of the default mode network, while somebody's sleeping, and possibly altering them to see if, while they're sleeping, the things that account for episodic discontinuity. So that's in a dream. Well, I had a good example of this last night.

Joel Burchard (00:59:07) - I dreamed that, um, I was at a farmhouse, and I was it was some sort of college graduation party. And then I went inside the house. And then inside the house there was a dock, and I got on a kayak and started swimming around, and it all seemed totally normal. Yeah, of course, that's episodic discontinuity. If that were to happen in real life, you'd go, what the heck is happening? But in a dream you just go, yeah, this is fine. Yeah. Um, so with my research, I would hope that if I were to magnetically stimulate these two parts of the brain while somebody was dreaming, they would suddenly have the sensation that, oh, wait, this isn't right. And they they possibly be into a lucid sort of dream. But dreaming is another.

Else Kramer (00:59:53) - Jolt into awareness that something was off. And it was a dream, basically.

Joel Burchard (00:59:57) - Yeah, yeah. And mean dreaming, you know, as far as consciousness goes, that's another weird aspect, right? It's amazing.

Joel Burchard (01:00:05) - Yeah. We want to think that, you know, our, our conscious awareness is so concrete and free and real and these sorts of things. But then we don't really we just sort of brush under the rug that eight hours a day. We live in this fantasy world while we're not moving. Right. And if aliens were to come to Earth, that's what they'd think is probably the weirdest thing about us, right?

Else Kramer (01:00:24) - Yeah, right.

Joel Burchard (01:00:24) - That spend to spend a third of your life not moving and living in this strange fantasy world.

Else Kramer (01:00:31) - Oh, I love that way of thinking about it. Okay, there was something else I want to ask about. Yes, you said something about criminal justice, and I thought, okay, this is a very interesting topic to talk about. As in, so many of the fast brained humans have this overdeveloped sense without justice. So they would say it's perfectly well developed, which we can like. Agree on that too. But like the idea that things should be fair and just is that.

Else Kramer (01:00:58) - Education? Is it nurture? Is it hardwired?

Joel Burchard (01:01:03) - Yeah. It's funny. I've been listening to an audiobook recently that that sort of shed some light on this for me. Um. And so it's depressing, especially in America. It's very depressing to to study criminal justice because you find we have an 86% recidivism rate, which means that anybody who commits a crime, oh, within the first, within the first year, 86%.

Else Kramer (01:01:27) - That's insane and very depressing indeed.

Joel Burchard (01:01:29) - So, yes. So there is, you know, it's it's bleak, it's very bleak. And the criminal justice system is more focused around punitive punishment than any type of rehabilitation, which if you look in the grand scheme of things, it's much more beneficial to reintegrate people into productive members of society than to just punish them for the rest of their lives for something that they did, and to essentially harden them into criminals that they wouldn't have been if under other circumstances. But I think what it boils down to, and it's not just in criminal justice, like you said, I think it's an education.

Joel Burchard (01:02:07) - I think it's in religious and political tolerance of other people. What it is is they they see that you you treat people better when you view your relationships as non-zero-sum. Right? Which is essentially win win. Yeah. If you view your relationship with somebody as win lose, that's when you get competitive. And as competitive animals, humans will go to great lengths to do terrible things to other humans and will use their rationality in a twisted way to justify it. Right? Right. Um, and so I think that somebody who people who are smart and people who are philosophical can look at people from diverse backgrounds and diverse situations and even their enemies in a lot of cases and say, yeah, okay, I can see why this person would think what they think. I can see why they would act the way they act. And I can see that maybe I wasn't blameless in a situation, and they can see ways to remedy it going forward, whereas somebody who isn't thinking about it from a global perspective, but from only their own subjective perspective, is more likely to look at it and go, I'm right.

Joel Burchard (01:03:24) - Yeah. You know, full stop and, you know, then justify whatever actions they take to, you know, to, to hold up that, that false self concept. And so it's, it's difficult because it's a self reinforcing behavior. Right? I think that the more narrow and self focused you can make your perspective, the more confident you become in that belief system.

Else Kramer (01:03:54) - There's like almost a perverse reward system there. Yeah.

Joel Burchard (01:03:58) - Yeah. And so I think that that's the downfall of not the downfall, but that's what a lot of people perceive as being unconfident or weak or unsure in some smart people is there's always qualifiers, right? I never I never say anything, just, you know, full out. It's always, well, I think this or it should be this or it could be because. Yeah, exactly. Because I don't know everything. Right. So I'm trying to trying to take into account all of those things. Whereas somebody who is only thinking about it from their perspective is more likely to give a confident statement.

Joel Burchard (01:04:38) - And then if it's wrong, rationalize a reason for why it wasn't their fault or it wasn't wrong.

Else Kramer (01:04:44) - Isn't this fascinating? Because, I mean, so many people get promoted into positions of power where think many of us would agree they're not maybe the best person for the job. That's that's like I'm being very that's very much an understatement. Um, and yet

they get that job because of the crazy confidence and, you know, never having any sort of qualifying statements. I was just I don't know, this is how it is. Of course it is how it is, etcetera, etcetera. And then the people actually know much more about it who are probably better suited to job are sort of left there studying like, what the hell just happened? Like, this person got that job. They are not the right person. Is this something to do with how we humans interact as group and what we look to for leaders, or is it just as basic as, yeah, if you can just see the world in black and white and you can just be super confident and just proclaim things, we will believe you and we will hoist you on a shield and make your leader.

Joel Burchard (01:05:44) - Yeah, I think that there's some things that are true to it and some things that are kind of a false narrative that people just buy into. You know, there was one study recently where they found that, um. Unlike women, men will apply for a job that they only have one qualification for. Yes. In other words, a man, a man will look at a job resume and if he might not meet any of the qualifications. But as long as he meets one, he'll apply for it. Whereas a woman, I think that they needed more than half before.

Else Kramer (01:06:15) - They need 80%.

Joel Burchard (01:06:17) - Think 80%. Okay. Yeah, yeah. So, so yeah. I mean right there you have you know, there's the old axiom. Fortune favors the bold, right? Yes. Um, so you have men sort of putting themselves out into positions because they have this confidence that based off of qualifications is not deserved. Right? Yeah. And kind of going into it, um, then I think there's, there's the false narrative.

Joel Burchard (01:06:46) - Um, there's been a lot of research into dominant personality types in the workplace. And what they've found is that people tend to respect and follow and work harder for people who have pro-social behaviors. So people who are not, um, you know, arrogant jerks. Yeah. Who are not my way or the highway, you know, so people tend to like bosses and support bosses who value their input and, you know, treat them as human beings and do these sorts of things. So I think that, you know, there's a little bit of both. I think that the people who are confident are more likely to seize a position, and people who are less confident are less likely to prevent them or to put, you know, put up any sort of struggle against it. Yeah. Um, but I think the people that tend to be successful long term are the people that, um, even if they are confident, um, tend to value the perspectives of others and, you know, do well to integrate pro-social people.

Else Kramer (01:07:53) - So it's interesting because as we're recording this, I'm listening to Walter Isaacson, Elon Musk biography, which is a slightly different story. But then there always gets to be like exceptions to the rules, which also is a nice bridge to like my next card, which is risk. What role does risk play in your life?

Joel Burchard (01:08:15) - Yeah. This is something that is is very distinct to the person. Right. And I think this comes back to the conversation that what we were literally just talking about. Right. So who's going to enter leadership positions. You can't just base it on who's confident or

who's this. You know. Because if you go into any different workplace you will find all different types of leaders. So how did they get there? What did they do? Um, risk. You know, some people are risky, right? I'm the biggest example I can think of is my brother had a roommate in college who? You know, it was always just barely passing grades and was always goofing off and just being crazy.

Joel Burchard (01:09:01) - And then right out of college to get applied for a job that he was woefully unqualified for. And he got the job. Yeah. And, you know, making a ton of money. And it all worked out for him. Great. Because he's a very personable guy. And then I think of other situations where there's people who are highly competent but, you know, are not risk takers. And they they don't they don't get anywhere. Right? Yes. Um, so I think that as far as, you know, risk inherently is a risk. Sometimes it's going to work out for you, sometimes it's not. Yeah. Everybody has a different risk tolerance. Some people, you know, some people are wild cards. They just like rolling the dice. Other people like having playing things very safe. Um, I think as far as I go, um. In some, you know, and in some regards it's one or the other. Right? I think creatively I'm a big risk taker. Right.

Joel Burchard (01:10:00) - Because I don't edit coming back to music, right? Yeah, I don't edit. I don't listen back to anything in the moment. I go, you know what? I think that this would be the cool thing to do. Or in the moment I go, you know what? This is too bland, too lame. I'm going to try something exciting and hope that it's not too far and left field and I go with it. In other parts of my life. I'm probably a little bit more risk averse, you know? Um. So I think it's I think it's sort of, you know, examining yourself and not just yourself as a whole, but yourself in the various different aspects of your life and saying, how much risk can I tolerate, you know, and what would be the consequences of failing and what would be the consequences of succeeding? Um, a good example for me in terms of being risk averse would be romantically right. Like, I know the the way that I'm set up as a person that I would not handle rejection well.

Joel Burchard (01:11:05) - But I also know that who I am as a person is somebody who is very independent. And so I don't really need a whole lot of social contact. So as a result, I never asked a girl out in my life, not a single time. So I was always the one getting asked out, right? And it never it didn't happen too often, but you know, it. It did happen enough times that eventually my wife.

Else Kramer (01:11:28) - Will now married, right?

Joel Burchard (01:11:29) - Yeah, yeah, I married so worked.

Else Kramer (01:11:31) - Out I love this.

Joel Burchard (01:11:32) - But but again it's risk reward. If I never got married, would I still have a fulfilling life like I do now? Yes. It wouldn't be the same. You know, now that I have a wife, I know I'd be missing out on something. But if I. If I had never met her, I don't know that I'd necessarily know I would be missing out on something. Whereas the risk of rejection, especially

after, you know, a long term relationship or that sort of thing, could be, could be sort of devastating just based off of what I know about myself.

Joel Burchard (01:12:03) - So yeah, it's just looking at different, different aspects of who you are and playing out the scenarios before you engage in them. What is what's the worst thing that could happen? What's the best thing that could happen? Where do I lie and what sort of path I want to take given those two options?

Else Kramer (01:12:21) - Mm 100%. And I would add to that also, some people sometimes do kind of audit like maybe once a year or so, like where have you become so risk avoidant whereas like completely unnecessary just out of kind of habit where you're like, oh, my life is getting a bit small and a bit boring, what the hell's going on? Oh, I'm actually being very risk avoidant here and I don't need to. Yeah, right. So am very risk avoidant when it comes to my investments and stuff. And I'm totally fine with that because it helps me sleep at night. Right. And if I would like be putting my money in bitcoin or like or all of my money in bitcoin, I have some money in Bitcoin.

Else Kramer (01:13:00) - But. Right, I like to diversify. But when it comes to like new business ventures and trying out new things, that kind of stuff, I'm like, bring it, bring me more, let's try something new. Let's do something nobody else has done before, right? Which is so interesting. And sometimes I just need to remind myself that I can bring a bit of what I'm like, you know, in my business to other areas in my life, whether it's social or whether it's, you know, investments or whatever, that you can actually use that energy and that sort of confidence. I think it kind of carries over. You can kind of play with it. Yeah.

Joel Burchard (01:13:36) - Yeah, it comes back to, you know, music is a good example, right. When I was talking earlier, you want to practice, right. Because you want to keep your skills up, but you don't want to practice to the point where you're getting ingrained into a rut. Well, what is life if not practice, right? You're always practicing whether you're at work or in your relationships or in your creative endeavors.

Joel Burchard (01:13:56) - So if you're always practicing, then you always have to be looking out for the ruts that you're making. Yeah. Knowing, you know, if those ruts are taking you down a road that you want to go down, or if you know you need to to shake things up and head a different way.

Else Kramer (01:14:11) - And I think, again, a lot of listeners have familiarity with being very bored. Right. Like bore out is a real thing, especially if they're stuck in a job they don't like. Um, so how do you of course you're doing a gazillion things. I think we've only touched upon like a few of them. But how do you keep things interesting? Like in addition to doing a gazillion things, how do you kind of keep it fresh?

Joel Burchard (01:14:35) - Um, at work or just in other.

Else Kramer (01:14:37) - Things, like at work in general? In your in your marriage, like. Yeah.

Joel Burchard (01:14:43) - Yeah. So I think, you know, I'm lucked out with, with my job because, you know, I'm, I'm a plant manager for a manufacturing place and I've, I've worked there for ten years.

Joel Burchard (01:14:54) - And I started at the bottom as, as an operator and moved up to a shift supervisor and then into an inventory and scheduling role. And now I kind of run a lot of the operations. So I know everything inside and out. And so the job provides a very good mix of physical and mental engagement without there being, um, the stress of being overwhelmed. You know, I'm very lucky that the position doesn't require me to work overtime. It doesn't require me to. Work weekends or holidays or anything like that. So I have a very defined period that I can plan around for my other activities. While I'm there, you know, I get to move around a lot. I get to engage a lot of problem solving skills.

Else Kramer (01:15:41) - And say, I bet you could solve, like, amazingly fun puzzles in that job.

Joel Burchard (01:15:45) - Yeah, yeah, yeah. And so, you know, I've worked and I've worked in all departments, right? I've done quality stuff. I've helped out with some engineering things.

Joel Burchard (01:15:54) - I do, you know, production things. So it's it's really as long what I've found is just like everybody else. Right? I get frustrated with my job once in a while, and I hate it because I'm human. But what helps me in those moments is looking at it and going, much like with school, right when I'm when I start stressing about my grades at school, taking that step back and saying, well, why am I doing this? I'm doing this because psychology is this fascinating thing that is super interesting and it's fun to learn about, well, at work, you know, it's a little bit harder to do that because you're like, okay, well, I'm here for money, right? But you have to think of it as part of your life. You're going to spend a third of your life here. So you want to be doing something that you want to do? Yes. So what is it about my work that has redeeming qualities? Well, there's the output, right? We do things that are vastly important for the people that receive products.

Joel Burchard (01:16:46) - But also, for me personally, I get to solve challenges, right? I get to do cool things. And as long as I think of them as being problems that need to be solved and not problems that are going to stress me out or cause me some great, you know, psychological angst, then I love it. But yeah, you know, we're all we all fall prey to those sort of overthinking loops that we have to really the, the only thing you can do is shake yourself out of them, you know, and that's the that's the thing is it's hard to do, but it's the only way even even going to therapy for for different things. Right. It's essentially you shaking yourself out of things. Yeah.

Else Kramer (01:17:30) - And also getting a different perspective. Right. And from, from a hypnotherapy perspective, we would call this associating out of the problem. Associating out of your story.

Joel Burchard (01:17:39) - Yeah. Yeah. And it's that's the way you can solve a lot of different problems is, is by changing the perspective, you always have to be thinking from a new perspective.

Joel Burchard (01:17:49) - And that's what helps you get out of negative thought head spaces. But it's also what helps you get into positive ones in terms of being curious about different things like we were talking about earlier, right? If you see the same sky all the time and you just don't think about it, then it's just there. But if you see it as something new each time, then it becomes something interesting and fascinating.

Else Kramer (01:18:11) - Totally, 100%. So when you think about like, your life and meaning, what would you say like to sort of run things? Like what? How do you give your life meaning? I'm not going to ask what is the meaning of life? Because that would be a, you know, infinite podcast episode. How do you give your life meaning?

Joel Burchard (01:18:32) - Yeah, I think that. It's it's a difficult balance between. Not taking things so seriously. And also, um, you know, giving everything kind of a due weight, right? Yeah.

Else Kramer (01:18:52) - Taking it extremely seriously. Right. Yeah. In this, like, heavy, like, oh, I can't move anymore.

Else Kramer (01:18:58) - Everything is so serious kind of way. Yeah, yeah.

Joel Burchard (01:19:01) - So I think that we've done. It's something that's hard to sum up in a few words, but I think we've done a good job throughout this whole podcast sort of identifying that, which is, um, you know, if you if you try to think from a global perspective about what is meaningful, it gets real dreary and existential, and it's not a great place to go. But if you think about it from your personal standpoint, then really what's meaningful is whatever you deem to be meaningful in some ways, right?

Else Kramer (01:19:31) - You have infinite power people.

Joel Burchard (01:19:33) - Yeah. Yeah, exactly. And so, you know, and even if it's something as simple and this again, this looks different to everybody. Right. You I think we get bombarded by entrepreneurs right to say, oh yeah. You know I everybody should quit their 9 to 5 and begin a startup and do their own thing.

Else Kramer (01:19:51) - Well that's 100 K people. Yeah.

Joel Burchard (01:19:53) - Yeah. It's not for everybody.

Joel Burchard (01:19:55) - Right. And some people.

Speaker 3 (01:19:57) - And.

Joel Burchard (01:19:58) - You know I, I, I've got a good balance. Right. I like doing a lot of physical things. I like to do a lot of intellectual things. But some people are just intellectual. You know, I know some people that have very fulfilling lives that never leave their home town and they don't do much. They just do a lot of reading. Yeah. And there's been characters throughout history like this. Rene Descartes, right. He was a guy. His neighbors could set their watches by his daily walk. Right.

Else Kramer (01:20:25) - That's actually called it's not Descartes because Descartes actually traveled around a lot, but it's Immanuel Kant. And he would take it.

Joel Burchard (01:20:31) - Yeah, yeah, yeah, I mixed them up, no worries. But yeah. Didn't, you know, didn't leave within 30 miles of his hometown his whole life. Just taught at his college read. But, you know, one of the most amazing thinkers of of history. Right.

Else Kramer (01:20:44) - And by the way, still very relevant.

Else Kramer (01:20:46) - The way he thinks about how we can know things. Yeah. Mind blowing stuff.

Joel Burchard (01:20:50) - Yeah. And so, you know, again, meaning is going to look different for everybody. But essentially it's going to come from, you know, a subjective viewpoint. And you know, it's you can't you can't conflate that with objective reality or objective facts. And you can't try to create a false equivalency between the two. You know, you just I look at my life and try to determine each day, right? If I'm satisfied with how it's going right. And if it's not, I make changes to to try to get it headed in the right direction. But yeah, yeah, that's pretty much it.

Else Kramer (01:21:31) - I think. And I think when people underestimate is how much meaning we get to make, right, instead of sort of waiting like, is my life meaningful or closely judging ourselves? Like, how do I create meaning? And even if I think this is why creativity is so crazy fun and so like healthy, joyful, all the things.

Else Kramer (01:21:57) - Because creativity is a kind of meaning making activity in a way. Yeah.

Joel Burchard (01:22:04) - Yeah, exactly. And you know, the worst thing you can do for creativity is to try to give an outside or objective meaning, making perspective to it. Right? What gives it meaning is the fact that when you're doing it, it's something that that is engaging to you.

Else Kramer (01:22:23) - Yeah. And I think something that comes so naturally to you is that you take this power, right? And you assume it and you're like, I get to decide what I, you know, make meaningful. And I think so many people erroneously think like, oh, you know, some other authority is going to decide what is meaningful. No, no, no, no, no people. All right. This is one

of the secrets of life. You get to decide. And that is like a mind blowing power to someone is like it can feel like a heavy responsibility, but it's also super fun.

Joel Burchard (01:22:54) - Yeah. No. Exactly.

Else Kramer (01:22:57) - All right, so go play, people.

Else Kramer (01:22:59) - Seriously? Yeah. Thank you so much. Where do people find your podcast, which they now all I'm sure want to listen to.

Joel Burchard (01:23:07) - Yeah. So my podcast is from nowhere to nothing. You can find it pretty much anywhere. You know, it's on Apple Podcasts, Google, Spotify.

Else Kramer (01:23:15) - I'll put it in the show notes as well. Of course.

Joel Burchard (01:23:18) - Yeah, yeah. So you can find it anywhere. Um, yeah.

Else Kramer (01:23:22) - All right. Thank you so much.

Joel Burchard (01:23:24) - Yeah. Thanks for having me on. It was a lot of fun.